

GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN

By Walt McDougall

The Fate of Wicked Old Circe, Who Bewitched Little Ada Hoyt

IF THEY teach mythology at your school you will have heard of Circe, the siren enchantress, who bewitched all of the ancient heroes who passed her island by singing a weird and tempting song.

She drew them, you may remember, to her island and feasted them, after which she turned them into hogs, although some people think that was only a subtle reference to the way her guests ate and the amount of food they put away, but I guess the men who made up the myths knew all about it, and she really charmed them all right.

She lived at a time in the far distant past, when gorgons, hydra-headed monsters, giants with one eye, harpies, sirens and satyrs, as well as pretty nymphs and cupids, roamed all over the country, and you couldn't throw a stone in the woods without hearing a squawk from some funny creature of the kind.

Perhaps the harpies were the funniest and probably most often shot at by hunters, as they were half-bird, half-woman and not pleasant to look at all. They made their nests on the seashore of Africa and laid their eggs in the sand close to the sea, and sometimes the whole shore would be alive with young harpies crying for their mammae. I suppose a harpy's egg to-day would be worth hundreds of dollars to an egg collector, as there is none in existence, but, all the same, I am glad that they are extinct, because they were terribly cruel birds (or beasts, whichever they were), and life was not secure anywhere when they were flying about.

The satyrs and gorgons seem not to have been so troublesome and nobody minded the nymphs at all, while it was good luck to meet a cupid. But the dreadful siren, Circe, was feared and avoided as much as possible. When it became known that she had moved to a certain island all the sailors kept away from it, but sometimes the contrary winds blew them close enough to its shores to hear her fatal song, and then they seemed unable to resist the spell. They landed like men in a dream and walked right to her. After that nobody ever heard of them again, and as the island, after she left it, was always alive with pigs, it is quite probable that they were the poor, deluded sailors who had lost their shapes for a while.

The Enchanted Vase

As time passed—and, in fact, many centuries elapsed before Circe became only a memory—people began to believe that the enchantress had never existed at all and was only a fairy tale, but, as you will see, she had only changed her shape and was still at it, old tricks.

You wouldn't think she could have lived and kept out of the papers for two or three thousand years, but that's just what she did, and until the things happened to little James Hoyt and his sister Ada, about which I am going to tell you, nobody knew that there was such a charmer as Circe on earth.

Jimmy was about twelve or thirteen years old when the old junk shop burned down. He was at the fire, of course, and watched the ramshackle shanty burn to the ground with great interest. The day after the fire, as all of the boys were running around among the ruins picking up mishapen pieces of iron from the ashes to keep as reminders, Jimmy found a queer-shaped vessel, something like the alabaster vases on the mantel at home. It was covered with charcoal and dirt, but it was the best thing, he thought, for a souvenir that anybody had found, and he took it home, where he cleaned it, and discovered that it was made of bronze and was all covered with funny letters except in one place, where there was modeled the head of a beautiful woman.

It had a stopper that was fastened too tightly to remove easily and so he knocked it off with a hatchet. The ancient vase was almost empty, but at the bottom there was still a sort of paste that smelled exactly like spruce gum. Jimmy thought the vase must have come from some drug store, and he felt like tasting it, but he thought better of it, as his mother had often warned him not to put strange things in his mouth he covered the vase and thought no more about it.

The old vessel was so strangely shaped and so artistic that his mother placed it on the parlor table for folks to admire, and a few days later little Ada, finding herself alone in the room, took it down and removed the cover. She poked her hand in and felt about it, and, of course, got her fingers all covered with the strange balsam at the bottom.

Ada Became a Lamb

She promptly licked it all off for fear it would get on her dress, for she was a tidy little thing. It tasted very nice, and she ate some more, for she forgot her mother's caution as soon as she found how good it was. All of a sudden she saw a funny thing and looking down saw that she was all covered with a crinkly white wool that she no longer had girl's legs, but that of a lamb. She was awfully frightened, but in another minute she forgot to be afraid, for she had turned into a little lamb. She skipped about the parlor and said "ba-a, ba-a" without any thought that she had ever been a girl, and just then her mother ran in.

"Goodness gracious!" she cried. "Who let that lamb into my parlor?"

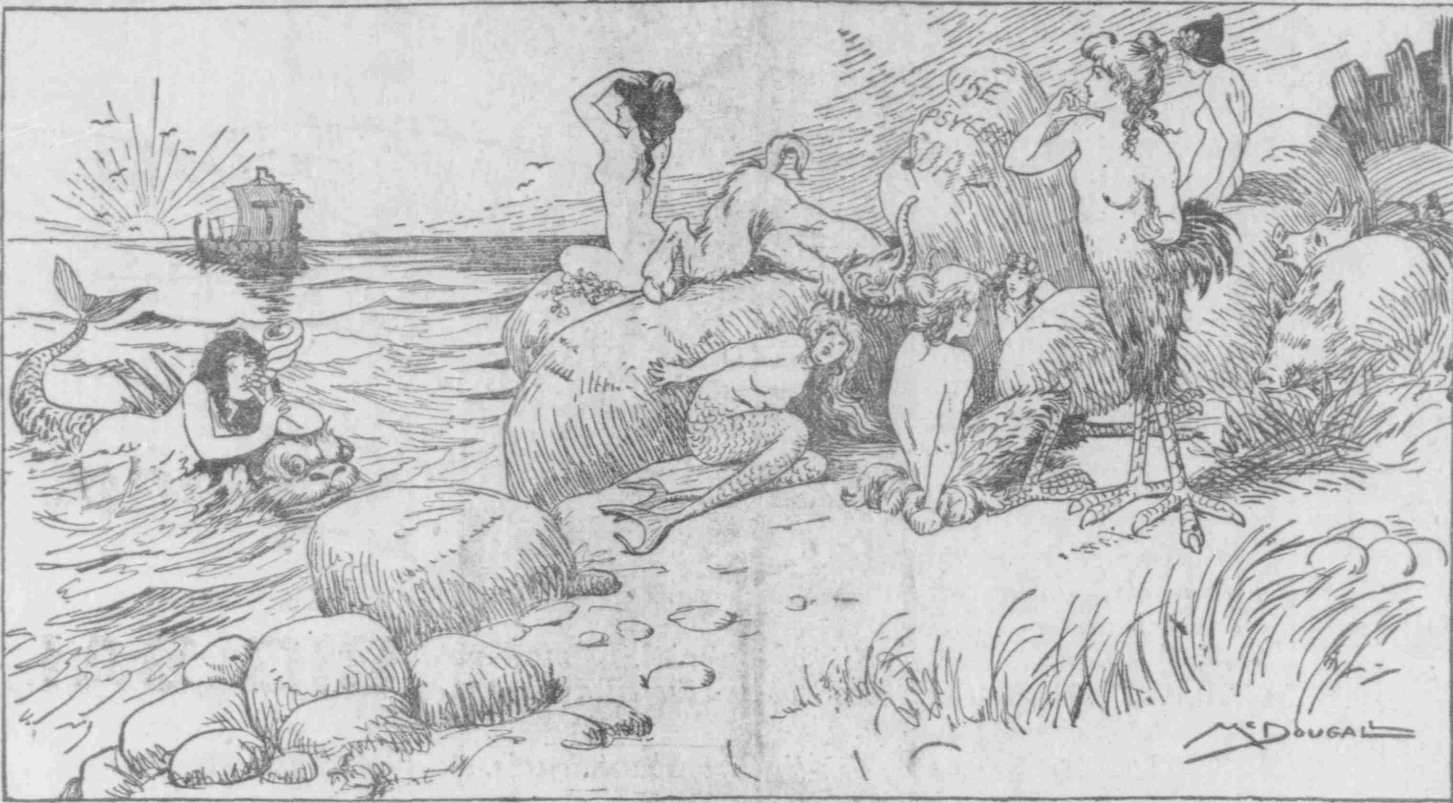
Ada looked at her and said: "Ba-a, ba-a."

She called for Jimmy, for the lamb was gamboling around like everything, and she was afraid it would upset the furniture. When Jimmy came he saw the old vase lying on the floor. Now Jimmy had been reading these tales of mine, and as he knew Ada had been in the room only a minute before he jumped at once to the conclusion that the child had been changed into a lamb. A boy who had never read these stories would not have thought of it, I suppose, but when he looked into the vase and saw that much of the stuff was gone he became certain. His mother, although dreadfully alarmed and pained, also arrived at the same conclusion after talking it over with Mr. Hoyt.

It was an awful thing to happen to people, and they were much worried about it. They didn't know what to do, and yet they hated to ask advice from their friends, for they didn't want folks to know that such a thing had happened in their family, for they were great society people.

Mrs. Hoyt determined to send the lamb

A Modern Prince, in His Swift Automobile Came to Aid of the Children and Helped Them Against the Deadful Siren



THE ENCHANTED ISLAND OF CIRCE THE SIREN

into the country, with Jimmy to take care of it, for she was to have a party that very night, and didn't want it bleating around upstairs, for then the people would ask, "Where is that lamb?" and confuse her very much.

So they got a nice box for Ada, and Jimmy went with it to the train, and they departed for the country. Jimmy took the vase along in his trunk, for fear some of the other children, of whom there were thirteen in the Hoyt family, might taste it also, and be changed into something. The place where they went was high up in the Madregora Mountains, far away from any other house, and where even the letter man or book agent came only once or twice a year. There Ada could gambol about on the green grass to her heart's content, and nothing could harm her. From morn until night she ran around, bleating contentedly, as happy as any lamb you ever saw, and never gave a sign that she remembered that she had once been a girl.

She grew larger and larger every week, and soon she would have been a sheep, I suppose, had she not got at the fatal vase one day, knocked it off the table, kicked off the lid and stuck her nose in, after which she licked it dry, just as Jimmy came into the room. He uttered a wild yell of horror, which altered to a deep groan as he saw her change before his very eyes from a nice clean lamb into a cow—a large, red cow, with long horns and sad eyes.

A Cow in the House

So swift was the change that it almost paralyzed Jimmy, but after awhile he sat up and made up his mind that it could not be helped, yet he blamed himself for leaving the vase about. Still, I don't think anyone would have suspected that a lamb would do such a thing, and I imagine that there was a good deal of girl left in her. So I do not blame him at all. If she had been a cat, a dog or even a mouse, he might have feared some such result, but as it was, it was extremely unlikely to occur.

Well, there was a big red cow in the house, and the first thing to do was to chase her outside and put her in the barn; but before that he put the vase in a closet, for he didn't want her to get at it again, and perhaps become an elephant, or an alligator. He was quite thankful that it had turned out as it had, for he couldn't see, any more than I can, why she should happen to be a cow instead of a hippopotamus or a sealion.

She went to the barn very quietly, for she was as much of a cow now as she had been a lamb before. She mowed calmly and chewed her cud as if she had always been used to that sort of thing, and Jimmy felt that perhaps a cow would after all be less trouble than a lamb, because she would stay in one place and not go nosing into the house. He kept her in a nice, sweet pasture back of the barn, and she seemed very happy all day long, while he went fishing in the river nearby.

Time passed and the summer was well along, when one day a butcher named Raum came along that way buying cows, and when he saw Ada he wanted her, for she was fat and nice. He waited at the house until Jimmy arrived, and asked him how much he wanted for her.

Jimmy told him that she wasn't for sale, but Mr. Raum was determined to have her if possible, and finally the boy, with tears in his eyes, told the butcher the whole story. Mr. Raum was amazed at the tale, and asked to see the vase. When Jimmy brought it the butcher exclaimed: "Why, that's a Greek vase!" He examined it

carefully and then he told Jimmy that he was a graduate of Princeton College and read Greek as easily as English, and then he translated the letters carved on the vase. He said the woman whose head was on the side of it was Circe, and the words were these:

"CIRCE HER AMPHORA (that was a kind of vase-like vessel) TOUCH IT NOT, O FINDER, LEST YE BE METAMORPHOSIZED!"

"Geel!" cried Jimmy; "that's a long one! What does it mean?"

"It means changed into something," replied the educated butcher. "That's what Circe, the ancient enchantress, used to do to people. By George!" he added, in an astonished tone, "I wonder if it could be possible that this is really her vase."

"Guess it must be," said Jimmy; "it worked that way, anyhow."

Upon it, some of which were quite faint and indistinct as well as so very ancient as not to be found in any Greek dictionary, so that he had not been able to read all that was carved upon its bronze surface. He promised to tell nobody about the story he had heard, but said he would return when he had more time and see if he could discover from the words on the vase whether there was anything said about a remedy for the magic balsam.

"I will examine my old Greek books," he promised before he went away, "and try to find out what I can about such charms and spells. Perhaps if you should feed her on ambrosia it would cure her."

Jimmy wondered where he could get any ambrosia, while he knew was the food of the gods in ancient times, according to his mythology book, and he spent many hours in the endeavor to ascertain if it was a

stable, and he was ashamed of his broad shoulders, for he was now a man, and when they asked him to buy a dress suit he laughed, and said that it wouldn't suit a farmer. He was fully as handsome as the prince, but they couldn't see it at all, for he was sunburnt and muscular and walked like a hunter. So he was always very glad to return to the mountains and Ada, who showed how pleased she was to have him come back by loud moos of delight.

Well, one day the Prince took his sister for a ride and, as luck would have it, the gasoline gave out just as they were passing Jimmy's cottage in the mountains, and they came to a full stop. The Prince got out and went to the house. The door was open and he entered, but found no one at home, as Jimmy was away fishing. They had to wait, however, as they were many miles from town, and they sat down

well acquainted with each other during the evening that Jimmy told them the story of how Ada had been changed into a cow and it made the Princess Madeline cry.

But the Prince rose up and was very angry. "You say the butcher read the words on the vase?" said he. "He told you that it was the vase of Circe, the enchantress, and I believe he is right. I have forgotten most of the Greek that I learned at college, but I hated Greek so that I still hate Circe."

Suddenly he smote himself upon his head and exclaimed: "Ah! Circe made pigs of men. I know where those dwells an old woman, hideous and wrinkled. She looks like a witch, and the woods all about her house are full of pigs!"

"I'll bet it's Circe herself," said Jimmy. "I'm sure of it," said the Prince, "for they don't look like mere pigs. They gaze at me when I pass by as though they had souls and their eyes are soft and tender as they look at me, as if I were a barrel of apples. No ordinary pigs look so sentimental, and I believe they are men, if not women as well."

"It is quite possible," added the beautiful Princess, wiping her lovely blue eyes. "In Geunthel we used to have many such witches until they made a law against them, and she may have been one of them who has come over here where there are no laws to interfere with their awful practices. It may well be that Circe went to Geunthel in old times and stayed there. You know that witches are only to be found in places where the people believe in them."

"To-morrow I will go over there and look into this matter," said the Prince.

Prince Finds Circe

"Oh, do not!" cried the Princess. "She will do things to you! You will be changed into something dreadful, and what would I do, No, you shall not."

"I must save that poor cow—I mean girl," said the Prince. "I cannot bear to think of her out in that barn standing up to a rack while we are cozy and comfortable in here. I do not see how you, her own brother, could stand it either."

"Oh, I got used to it after awhile," said Jimmy, "but even now it worries me sometimes, especially on cold nights."

"It's an outrage and a shame!" said the Prince, "and I am going to see if it cannot be remedied."

"What will you do?" asked Jimmy. "I will seek her out and if it is Circe I will make her undo this awful wrong or else I will kill her."

"If she talks Greek to you, how can you understand her?" inquired his sister. "Alas!" he cried, "I never thought of that. Oh, why did I neglect my Greek at college?"

This should teach us to always make use of our opportunities, for just such occasions may arise in the life of any boy and he may have use for any little bit of knowledge he may have gained at school. Now, you see if it had happened that the witch did talk Greek the Prince, of course, would have had no earthly show at all and the whole thing would have fallen through at the start. As it was she talked German, his own language.

Well, in the morning she filled the gasoline tank of the automobile, and the Prince went away, leaving his sister with Jimmy. They went fishing together, but soon forgot all about the fish. By the time they returned home that evening they were engaged to be married the next week.

They were very happy. They spent the evening wondering how it had all hap-

pened, and telling each other what they liked best to eat, and the Prince was entirely forgotten. He didn't come home that night, and in the morning they began to worry. Finally they both started out in search of him, for, of course, they thought his automobile had broken down again, as always happens to these things when far away from repair shops.

They strolled along the shady road, and were so intent on the color of each other's eyes that when the Prince's automobile came along they never heard it, and were very nearly run over. They got in, and she told his story.

He had found the home of the witch without much trouble surrounded by the pig-inhabited forest, and he discovered before the door. The witch came out at once, very glad to see a man, as she had not turned one into a pig for some weeks. The Prince smiled at her, and he was so handsome and fascinating that she almost forgot that she was a witch. She invited him to enter her house, and he did so at once.

He pretended to have lost his way in the woods and asked her about the roads. She told him all about them and then asked him what had become of his horses. "Yes, she had not seen him before, and she had never seen an automobile before, so she thought he had taken his horses out of the shafts and put them somewhere in the forest. He smiled and told her that he had never seen so beautiful a creature and she giggled very much, for she thought she had him.

After awhile she offered him food, but the Prince was far too busy to eat, and of her cooking, and told her that he had just had his breakfast. She asked his name, and when she found that he was the Prince of Geunthel, she was surprised, and without thinking, she said she was from the same place, so he knew that she must be a witch, of course. But she pretended to be very much in love with her and admired her eyes and long black hair, saying that only in Geunthel could be seen such beauty, until the witch was so tickled that she wriggled all over like a serpentine dancer in a side show at a fair. Oh, the Prince was a shy, shy Prince, I tell you.

The Swift Auto Ride

They paid each other compliments for some time and then the Prince begged her to take a ride with him. She assented, for she wanted to please him and coax him into eating some of her magic food. She went upstairs and got her hood and then took a seat in the automobile.

The Prince got in beside her and seized the lever, when she said: "Why, you have forgotten the horses!"

"We will go without them this trip," he replied, as the automobile darted off with a convulsive jump that threw the witch backward and almost broke her back. She screamed and made a movement as if to grab the reins as women always do in a carriage when a man drives, but as there were none she only caught at the air. She was very much startled and her hood got over her eyes, so she screamed again.

"Do not scream, my dear Circe!" said the Prince.

When she heard her name she almost fell out of the automobile, she was so startled, for she had not told it to him. She grew pale, but the machine was moving along at such a terrific speed that she couldn't speak; she could only grip the side bar and gasp.

After awhile she asked: "How do you like this sort of driving?"

"Let me get out and walk!" she gasped.

"Not until you tell me how to change a cow back into a girl," said he.

"Never!" she said, and she almost took her breath away. After they had gone about six miles he asked her again to tell him the secret, but she shook her head in silence, for she couldn't speak. Faster and still faster they whizzed along, and still she refused to tell him. Then he turned the machine into the fields and darted across ditches like a bird; dashed through woods and over a hedge chased by hounds; just missed hitting several telegraph poles and a few haystacks, and he asked her again. Pale as a ghost, she put her lips together and shook her head.

Then, with inconceivable velocity, they flew toward a farm house. She saw that they were going to strike it, and seized the Prince's hand. "I'll tell you!" she cried, but it was too late. They shot through the farm house like a cannon ball, overturning the people sitting at the dinner table like so many nine-pins, and until they went on the other side in a twinkling.

Gave Up Her Secret

"Well, tell me quick," said the Prince, as he steered the automobile toward a high hill. She looked at him as if she were going to refuse again, and then at the rocky hill. Thinking, of course, that he would go right through the hill as he had the house, she nodded and said: "Stop her, quick! I'll tell you the secret."

"Well, what is it?" asked the Prince as he quickly stopped the machine. She took a long breath. "Give me a platter filled with eggs, beaten up with paprika, exactly at midnight, and she will be a maiden again, but she will be as old as the cow, not as young as when she was changed."

"Thank you," said the Prince. "Now I will take you home again."

"Thanks yourself," said she; "but I'd rather walk. One trip in this is enough. You can do more wonderful things than I can. Let me out, and I'll get home all right, for I now see that we are near my own house."

She alighted, and then she said: "Tell me, how did you know my name was Circe?"

"I am a wizard," replied the Prince, and darted away like lightning.

Well, they changed Ada into a beautiful girl at midnight according to Circe's prescription, and the Prince, of course, fell instantly in love with her and declared that she must be his Princess.

Ada had been making cow's eyes at him all along, and was quite satisfied indeed. They went back to town and all were married, much to the mortification of all the other girls, and the great chagrin of the Hoyt family, who didn't know it was Ada until it was all over. Then they had the nerve to ask her to invite them to Geunthel to spend the summer.

Circe went home, but the shock had been too much for her, and in less than a week she died of heart-failure, for she had never been able to get her breath back after that awful ride.

WALT McDUGALL.



GOODNESS!" SHE CRIED, "WHO LET THE LAMB INTO MY PARLOR?"



"THE PRINCESS DISCOVERED ADA FEEDING IN THE PASTURE"